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***Nazi General Purchased
His Freedom, Italian Says***

Agence France-Presse

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ROME, May 14—German SS Gen. Herbert Kappler, who escaped from an Italian prison in 1977 while serving a life term for war crimes, was aided by the Italian secret service in return for a gold hoard worth 500 billion lire (\$340 million), according to press reports here today.

Gen. Kappler escaped in an ambulance from Rome's Celio prison hospital on Aug. 15, 1977. He died six months later.

Gen. Ambrogio Viviani, former head of the Italian secret service, told the weekly magazine Panorama recently that Rome and Bonn had agreed to the "escape" of Gen. Kappler so that he could die at home.

But the daily newspaper Repubblica said today that the Kappler affair was in reality much more complicated, and recalled a report by Mossad, the Israeli secret service, that the escape was tied to 80 tons of Bank of Italy gold confiscated by the Nazis during the war.